Claims

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for defining an electronic address, comprising:

selecting a preferred domain name;

selecting one or more allowable domain names;

selecting a preferred address format;

selecting one or more allowable address formats; and

retaining the preferred domain name, the one or more allowable domain names, the preferred address format, and the one or more allowable address formats to define the electronic address.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising acquiring a text string associated with a preferred electronic address and retaining the text string to further define the electronic address.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein in acquiring the text string, the text string is dynamically acquired from a directory object, when present in the directory object.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein in acquiring the text string, the preferred electronic address is calculated from a directory.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein in selecting the preferred address format and the one or more allowable address formats, the formats include one or more subcomponents.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein in selecting the preferred address format and the one or more allowable address formats, the one or more subcomponents are order independent within the preferred address format and the one or more allowable address formats.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein in selecting the preferred address format and the one or more allowable address formats, the preferred address format and the one or more allowable address formats include one or more subcomponents, and wherein the one or more subcomponents include at least one of an electronic login name, an administrator defined identification, a first name, a last name, a middle initial, a middle name, and a nickname.

8. A method to bind an electronic address, comprising:

receiving the electronic address;

separating the electronic address into a domain name and a prefix address component;

separating the received address format into one or more sub prefix address components;

determining one or more resolvable address formats by using combinations of the one or more of the sub prefix address components; and

binding the electronic address by using the domain name, the determined one or more resolvable address formats, and the one or more sub prefix address components.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein in binding the electronic address, candidate electronic addresses are dynamically constructed and compared against the sub prefix address components in order to bind the electronic address.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein in binding the electronic address, one or more candidate electronic addresses are constructed from attributes in a directory and one or more of the candidate electronic addresses are eliminated from consideration based on policies until a single candidate electronic address matches the electronic address, wherein the single candidate electronic address is bound to the electronic address.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein in binding the electronic address, the policies are dynamically configurable.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein in binding the electronic address, the policies include preferring a candidate electronic address having an internal domain name that matches the received domain name, preferring an internal candidate electronic address over an external candidate electronic address, preferring a proper name candidate electronic address over a nickname candidate electronic address, preferring a visible candidate electronic address over a hidden candidate electronic address, and preferring a candidate electronic address based on its proximity to the electronic address.

13. The method of claim 8, wherein in receiving the electronic address, the electronic address is a handle that identifies a user, a group of users, an electronic mailbox, an electronic account, or an electronic application.

14. The method of claim 8, wherein in separating the prefix address component, the prefix address component is separated by using delimiters included in the electronic address.

15. An electronic addressing system, comprising:

a directory;

a data store;

an addressing set of executable instructions; and

wherein the directory includes one or more resource objects including resource attributes, and the data store includes entries that define electronic addressing policies for a number of the resource objects, and each entry includes a preferred domain name, one or more allowable domain names, a preferred address format, and one or more allowable address formats, and wherein the addressing set of executable instructions binds received electronic addresses by using the directory and the data store.

16. The electronic addressing system of claim 15, wherein one or more of the resource objects are organized as a hierarchy within the directory.

17. The electronic addressing system of claim 16, wherein a number of the resource objects occur at a child level within the hierarchy and inherit a number of the addressing policies from a number of the resource objects occurring at a parent level within the hierarchy.

18. The electronic addressing system of claim 15, wherein each of the entries include a text string representing a preferred electronic address for the corresponding resource object.

19. The electronic addressing system of claim 15, wherein a number of the resource objects represent at least one of a user, a department, an electronic post office, an application, a geographic location, a user job function, and a hardware device.

20. The electronic addressing system of claim 15, wherein the addressing set of executable instructions also binds the received electronic addresses based on policies defined in the data store.

21. A data structure residing on a computer readable medium used to bind an electronic address, comprising:

a preferred domain name;

one or more allowable domain names;

a preferred electronic address format;

one or more allowable electronic address formats; and

wherein the data structure is used in connection with dynamically acquired resource attributes to bind the electronic address.

22. The data structure of claim 21, further comprising a modifiable electronic address representing a preferred electronic address.

23. The data structure of claim 21, wherein the preferred electronic address format and the one or more allowable electronic formats include subcomponents.

24. The data structure of claim 23, wherein the subcomponents occur in any order within the preferred electronic address format and the one or more allowable electronic formats.

25. The data structure of claim 21, wherein the resource attributes are derived from resource objects represented within a directory hierarchy.